

Bill Briggs at Leejays Sportsman's Cafe

Bill: I came out to Jackson in 51, climbing wise and at the time I was with Peter Robinson and Willie Unsoeld invited Peter at that time to join in as a guide. He was president of the Dartmouth mountaineering club at the time and we were going up to the bugaboos to climb

and we did a couple of first ascents in the Tetons at this time and I had no idea at the time that I would become a guide, that was out of the realm, and when Peter was asked to be a guide I figured he doesn't really have the makings of a guide, you know, he wouldn't be sensitive to the needs of the client

I was astounded, I was new to climbing, to mountaineering, and I was astounded that I would be making first ascents and going into the bugaboos and making first ascents, here at the beginning of my career, I was just astounded I love this pioneering aspect to the sport, anyway, but that put the idea my head to be a guide, I thought, gee, if they are asking Peter to be a guide, gee, I could do that one. early 50s, in 51 so I had in mind that I would get myself up to being capable of doing this job of being a guide, and went right to climbing from then on with that sort of thought in the back of my mind

meanwhile I ended up teaching a rec course in climbing at Dartmouth, which meant the mountaineering club people were my students, as it were, in rec club so we had a very informal program, which was a pile of fun, we had a good time with it, we had a swiss guide named Charlie -- Feuer from Zurmat that I worked with, he was the official paid person, and I was the unofficial unpaid person, but we ran the whole program. He was an awfully nice guy to work with, he was a famous guide and all of this sort of thing, so I had a good taste for the background of european guiding

I had a pretty good background. A lot of the guys that I taught, you know in the rec program, went on as guides for Glen, before I did, so we had Barry Corbet, Sterling Neal, Jay Breitenbach, Bob French, but those three started guiding before I did, but I was the one that had, they were under my program at Dartmouth and I was so astounded

that these guides were already guides

I really took a look at it, if you are going into a profession, any profession, you really need to know what the clothes entail, and I set my own qualifications quite a bit higher than I think that others necessarily do, but, If I'm going to be a professional at something it has to be an outstanding quality, you really have to be outstanding at it

all during the 50s

hadn't really met Glenn yet, but knew about him and Paul,

I was pretty well read up on climbing as a member of the Alpine Club, they got me started at Exeter in Mountaineering, and I joined this club, Alpine club

I was really impressed with these people, these were outstanding individuals, okay, and Bob bates is an incredible man, and I had him for an English teacher, good lord, to come up to a caliber like that, that is my idea of a good guide, and they did K2

and you take Willie Unsoeld, there again, here is a guy who is an incredible personality, but I didn't have anything near what those guys had, nothing by no comparison at all, and there was my idea of what should be a guides, this is the, who should be the ones representing the profession, I didn't fit, I didn't make the grade at all

I finally changed my mind when I did Bugaboo Spire, which Conrad Kane originally put the route up, and I did his route, I did the whole thing, I led the whole at that point I decided that if I could lead Conrad Kanes's original climbs that he felt was very tough for him, that was his high point, I could do that comfortably and guide the people up and back down, that I was ready at that point in my own mind

[Briggs did climb in mid-50s]

At that point I decided okay, I qualified, so I talked to Barry Corbet

and how I would get on, and Barry said well you have to be there at the right time and so forth, and there was another fellow, I forgot his name, who was guiding that summer, he is a doctor, named he was there just that one summer, and um Jack never guided for Glen, Jack was from the early 30s when he

In any case, it nevertheless gives a background to Glenn,

The impression was that there was a lack of people wanting to guide, this was not a profession, this was an avocation, not a vocation

[Briggs discusses the point where we were at in American mountaineering as opposed to European mountaineering]

It was a wonderful pioneering time, I mean, I had no idea what I was doing, heh heh, heh

No we were all so much on the front end of things that you never really thought of it in a historical viewpoint this was what was happening now, nobody cared about it what could we do with it now? What could we do with this new piece of equipment, where is the next thing to happen was I going to wind up mountaineering or skiing - was I going to be a guide or run ski schools

This was not a profession, this was not a profession, not for glenn [Briggs says his parents thought he was nuts]

I mentioned to my father that skiing was a way of life which I wanted to pursue and he corrected me immediately and said, no, you can't make a living doing that so its not a way of life,

So when I go into climbing as well, then my mother said at one point, "I wish you wouldn't climb and ski so much. Do something more practical."

This was not a profession in the United States, it just wasn't a profession that you went into, not guiding, no training involved this was just simply something that you did for the summer, temporarily and you did it only for a few summers, okay, this was not your line

of work, you had some other line of work for a career, but I had decided in 1952, that I would devote my life to what I found enjoyable, which worked for me, and that was skiing climbing and music, so I had three things that I would simply make my life work around, that I would make a career out of these things, and that was decided in 52 so, I was setting out at that point to make a career out of these things, of course that was against my parents desires, they wanted me to be a professional a doctor -- but I got expelled from Dartmouth soon after that decision.

I wound up asking Barry, "How do I become a guide?" well get to know Glenn, so I said okay, I tried to get to know Glenn. having music in common was not an issue at the time, something that never came up, I didn't realize that was something that he did.

I didn't know what he taught

Glenn and Beth, and to be on hand when it was available and so forth Gary Hemming and I both arrived for the same position, Glenn only needed one more guide and it was Gary and I who were available Gary got the position We were the only two there when Glenn was going to take on one more guide, and this other fellow, he left in August, he didn't show up for his clients, and here are the clients right there, and Glenn knew that I was up on the hill, which he didn't really appreciate, here I was, staying in one of the cabins there, at Guides Hill, sleeping on the floor, I forget whether it was Barry's cabin, or perhaps it was Gary's, so Glenn came up in desperation and said do you want to take these clients up the Grand and I said sure, heh, heh, so I got myself together and took these clients up

and this it was, once you guide for Glenn, all is forgiven, so that's, you became one of Glenn's boys, you're part of the family, all of a sudden, he is going to take care of you, okay, which is a fabulous thing, because he is going to take care of what's best for you and now he is really interested in you, which was a real new experience to me, I had never been employed by someone who was a father figure, that this guy was going to take care of me, and I think he did that with everybody, I don't think I was anywhere near an exception. He always took care of people.

I tend to think he did so probably with his students of music

This is an important thing because he is outstanding at doing this, whether he intentionally did it, you know, malice of forethought.

The man is outstanding in doing this, this is a very major contribution, shall we say, to the profession.

Jean: So in a sense that quality enabled him to create this guide school and help climbing become a profession, it provided professionalism.

Bill: So essentially it was this degree of caring which entered in a new level of responsibility, this was being responsible, he was being responsible for his guides, his guides then became responsible for his clients in other words you try to emulate Glenn, the way you get taken care of is the way you take care of you clients, and um, in working with Charlie at Dartmouth, and here is this Swiss guide, Charlie didn't want to take care of these guys that we were teaching, he would try to keep arms length away from the guy.

Charlie was a good guide, he certainly was a good climber and skier and he was a good teacher, but the quality of getting involved with the students was not something Charlie wanted to get involved with.

My tendency was to be involved with these guys - Mike, Barry Corbet Jake and Sterling, and numerous of these other guys, I got very involved with these guys, we went out and we did new routes and so forth and yet I would take Charlie out and we would do a repeat of those routes and Charlie would be very impressed with what we were doing, but he wasn't out there doing it with the guides he wasn't interested in going out there and doing it with -- or even finding Jack Durrance's routes.

Barry was out to find every single one of Jack's routes, okay, and I was supposed to be the teacher, I couldn't climb as well as any of those guys could but I was really interested in staying with them there was one string of pitons that no one was even touching and finally I went up one day and did the thing, so it kept me on my toes

[this was all at Dartmouth]

So here was this attitude of mine of wanting to take care of my guys while I was teaching, come into a situation where Glenn was taking care of -- the same way.

So here was a guy who was taking care of a climbing business the way I thought it should be, okay? Whereas this was right in my line, and it was not the way Charlie was doing it.

This is an American way of doing things.

Jean: You worked with Willie?

Bill: Willie was gone but he came back for a year, the last year that he worked, that was the year that he worked, the year that I started, it was just in August so it was very short.

Willie had such care for his clients, it was a fabulous things, here is Willie, the guy had a personality that was just so dynamic and so appealing that you wind up doing your best with him.

Jean: It was inspiring.

Bill: Just fabulous. I did work quite a bit with Bill Byrd who runs Outward Bound in Portland. His wife at that time is living in Jackson, Joanne Byrd and Dick Pownall, and they were both, here again, here was the same quality, but it is an outstanding.

Anyway, I got a kick out of these guys, but what really astounded me was they had ways of doing things quietly, they could quietly move clients faster than I could, I had no way of moving clients to the degree that these guys could do it. They could move clients so quiet and so fast. I'm really junior to these guys I had no idea at how they were doing this.

Glenn was not good at it, Glenn was awkward in his guiding, it was too much command, not enough with the clients.

Anyway, Glenn was not the guide, the guys he hired were.

Jean: He was more of a facilitator.

Bill: For these people to become ... Ortenberger said well Glenn could always select people to be the guides, he was a master at selecting the right kinds of people. And gee, I disputed that, I still dispute that, the fact of the matter is, when you became a guide, Glenn then facilitated your becoming a super guide, but you weren't that to begin with.

He didn't know how to pick em, but he sure knew how to grow em.

So as a guide himself, I wouldn't say he was great, but the people, that he had working for him became super guides.

Jean: Did he encourage the guides to go out and achieve other things?

Bill: He encouraged him to do other things and make a career elsewhere, but guiding wouldn't be your career, that was the assumption, that you were going to have a career somewhere else, of course I came in there with this other idea in mind That was gonna be my career, not that I wanted to take over the guide service, but this was going to be my career, and as far as I know, I was the first one to have this as a career incentive I was going to make this a career, and I was going to make skiing a career

Glenn did not encourage him, all his guides were temporary, and he made a big point of that and it was by mistake or by demand that he kept going in this thing, he never expected to or never wanted to have this thing going, assumed something would be pulling him away.

Jean: What was your impression of Glenn? Did you respect him for climbing the Exum route?

Bill: A lot of it was luck, just being first, early on in the thing, he was a climber, he was not much of a climber, technically. We all, I never made fun of it, but it was made fun of, his technical knowledge was way behind times, he was way old fashioned, and

everybody wanted to update him, bring him up to current times.

Jean: He didn't want to?

Bill: I was really way onto Glenn's side, I didn't like the updating of equipment, techniques, so on and so forth, I didn't like it and I fought it all the way and that put me at odds with the rest of the guides and I hung on and got fired eventually

and uh, I am the only one who ever got fired

Glenn wanted to hold to tradition, and I wanted to hold to tradition, and the climbing school and the guiding, needed to keep all of the heritage intact. Its vital to the well being of the profession and the sport to maintain connection all the way through the heritage of the sport, and I'm really set on this and Glenn was, in other words, some of the best values of the sport were those that were developed early on and if you lose them, okay, you lose those values in the sport and the profession, and we've lost them, okay, they are lost and I think glenn feels that way too I did everything I could to hold on to it, and I was very much on Glenn's side

But everyone wanted to update - there is a modern way of doing things that is better I insisted that they were not better, The fastest way of getting people off the Grand down the owen rappel, the fastest way is a body rappel, it is not putting on slings and what not, and if you are in a storm up there and you want to get your clients off, you use a body rappel therefore all the clients should know how to do a body rappel.

There is just no question about this when time is the element, the oldest technique is the best and that is just a fact and that is a fact that Glenn recognized.

So I always taught and always the climbing students do body rappels, and Glenn did.

That got eliminated putting a harness on adds one more complications, one more delay.

And we all, everybody was going, you know Chouinard would come out with these nice wide belts, and there was this nice webbing that you tie around your waist and you're tied into the webbing.

And god, I would go out and I would show them, look, the webbing doesn't do anything, I don't care you use the best webbing, the best that you can and you go up and you fall off, fall off up there and you are just kicking in space, I want to see how long you can keep your breathing going. It doesn't matter how long, you are still going to strangle

So we made up these seats, we developed that, use that in climbing because that would save you from being strangled, but there were too many flaws in the seat you still must be able to have the guy tie into we need to clients to be able to do this, and there are places along the guided climbs where people would have to use these.

We had new guys come in in the 60s, trying to update "Glenn is too old fashion" he needs to update, well I would keep on defending the old fashion the old fashion is damn good, it had good stuff to it, I would keep on defending it but I didn't know how to hold my ground.

I didn't get to know Petzoldt until much later. Petzoldt was very traditionally oriented, Dick was, so was Willie. The new generation that came in was a little bit younger than I was, I wasn't as old as those guys, so I really held with the old guys while experimenting with the new - I didn't mind being on the front edge of things, but I hated to see any of the old get lost, okay, uh, I mean no one, and we all have these nice chinks and everything else what they don't realize is what they used to use originally was stones, you took a sling and put stones in the sling and fit it into a crack, and that is how we originally did it, so these were called chalk stones, and you put the chalk stones in and they were cleverly placed. and they stayed there

Then they come up with a whole idea that you have chalk -- and slings tied to them

Jean: Do you have any stories about Glenn you can relay?

Bill: He guided very little. I wasn't impressed with him as a guide, I really wasn't. Barry Corbet was very impressive as a guide and the older guys were unbelievable, there are qualities in those guys and how they guided.

Glenn ran the business, Beth was helping, she didn't like it, it was not her line of work, and I think wanted Glenn out of there. Glenn hung on. He liked, he really liked his boys and I think he hung on to the business because he liked caring for these boys.

But also to keep the tradition going. He got scared by the new guys coming in and what they were trying to do. I just sense, I never got to talk with him. Al Read became the person who could talk with Glenn the easiest and the most. I trusted and used Barry as the guy who interpreted what Glenn wanted and Barry was very trustworthy, I just followed along.

Jean: Did you and Glenn share music later?

Bill: He would perform at parties, he and Eddie and uncle -- he would perform too, do a really good job, he was a good radio character. Glenn would perform and I would perform. I was third in line.

Barry sold me on the fact, to Glenn, that I could yodel, so...

Jean: Glenn could be very impressed with people's accomplishments.

Glenn: The integrity of the individual was something very highly prized by him. If he wanted to he could pull these people together and make a wholeness out of it and what not which was a wonderful endeavor of his, it was intentional, but he never, the impression was that it was always just by chance.

Jean: It was subtle.

Bill: Very back of the scenes and what not to such a degree that people said he was a simple man, and he really didn't understand

what he was doing. Well I don't know, I don't agree with that, I think he understood what the values were, the problem was that he had no words to explain it, it wasn't the common vernacular anyway, these things were not discussed and he said

[Bill discusses his band, and how he structured a classroom situation so everyone felt that they had some part in controlling what happened]

Bill: This is a rare quality, okay. Bob Bates was the same at Exeter, my English teacher, he did the same thing in the class, we were definitely a part of the class, it was not something that is done overtly. You never knew that this was going on and Glenn would do that, and he would do it again in the same fashion, but the fact of the matter is that he would do this in the interest of these boys, these were his boys and he was doing this in order to help his boys, it was not to help Glenn. There was not the slightest bit of personal gain involved in any of this, which was just fabulous. All his interest was in making sure that you came together yourself, so he did everything he could to help you come together, and we were really scattered people, we were really off the wall.

You talk of family values now being a big thing in the Clinton administration. I mean here it was happening he wanted us to come together with each other, being a fraternity he called it, a fraternity of guides, and I was really a rebel maverick within the guides, and I didn't like it when there would be this opposition to what Glenn was doing. I wanted things the way Glenn wanted it because it was too valuable to lose.

This was a man who was creating what I call the greenhouse for us to grow in and you don't throw rocks in the greenhouse. And here were these guys throwing rocks at the greenhouse

[Bill discusses how there was dissent - a coordinated effort around the issue of modernization.]

Jean: How was school operated?

Bill: There was only one class, beginning school, and they took people up the Grand and Herb Swedlund joined us early on, the year after I did - [Briggs did in '58] Herb, then, must have joined in '59. [Briggs was 27 at the time he joined].

Herb joined us and Herb was a very difficult guy, he was a genius, and I had a tolerance factor which was pretty high, so I could overlook a great many of the failings and see the genius part and work with that so Herb and I sat down, essentially to put together the intermediate school.

[Briggs explains how he and Herb saw the necessity of having different level courses.]

We were doing intermediate schools before that - there were intermediate schools being run. What we decided was to have an intermediate school before going up the Grand and you would adjust the intermediate school to whatever the instructor wanted to do, so what Herb and I did was to put the intermediate school on top of the other so it builds up where you had a better client to take up the Grand. So we essentially put a particular curriculum together.

Glenn thought it was fine, so we just felt that the people that we were taking up the Grand weren't enjoying the thing because it was way too far over their head. So those who finished intermediate school that we took up the Grand found it was really easy, that it was no longer an incredibly overwhelming experience. They were prepared and they could enjoy all of the features of the Exum Ridge so we put the curriculum together for the intermediate school to make it into something that would work.

We did this in the 60s, just when I couldn't tell you, but Glenn was very supportive of it.

Al Read left, and then Herb and I became co-chief guides, and it was this advancement which was built on the old, in other words you kept what Glenn had in basic school, you kept that the same, you tied in with the one hand around the waist, and then you did all of the stuff that had been done before in basic school. You didn't leave any of it out. Then you built on to it with the modern stuff in the

intermediate school. And Glenn favored that, he accommodated that, and it didn't replace anything it added on, and it worked well.

Herb was one of the ones that wanted to replace everything, replace the ropes was something that was good, so Herb would throw it over the boat, whoops, it slipped off the deck. I don't know how many ropes wound up at the bottom of Jenny Lake.

But um, I wanted to keep all those things going, even the old ropes I found useful, and Glenn did, very conservative minded, the younger guys simply wanted to throw old things away, and this value, this conservation, recycle things, which Glenn really had a strong feeling about, we went a long way, what you had to use, what we were given to use by the park service, and the privileges of it

Glenn was marvelous in understanding that it was such a privilege to be able to operate, and the effect upon the park service, it helped out the park service because he was so conscious of what the role should be, and the guide, and the guys, the superintendents of the park, they all mention this, what an honor it was to deal with Glenn and how much they learned about how a concession should work.

The effect, if you really totaled it up, that Glenn had on the whole workings of the Park, was probably not small I'm going to guess that it really was substantial, if you really could total it up, the fact of the matter is Glenn really never

Jean: He set a precedent?

Bill: Glenn never was obvious, he never spoke about it, you never heard him praising himself that way,

The ranger shack there with John and Emerson in talking over the policy for signing out climbers, with the park, what was the park going to do about this whole thing, and I remember talking about this whole thing, putting on restrictions, and also sensing Glenn's input. He wasn't there and he was never mentioned, but you could feel this input from across the bridge you know, coming over and the influence what the decision was, and I happened to be there when the

decision was made and the decision was that we do not prevent anyone from going. Let anyone go anywhere they want, you can offer advice and you can have a ranger go out on their heels, but you can't stop them from going, so the sign out has to be an open door, the climbing school has to determine their guidelines for whether people could go

That subsequently became the standard, throughout the country, setting precedent.

This is not arbitrary stuff, there is a reason, and I think this is where Glenn's input came in so well.

Influencing into that whole thing there, it wasn't that they were setting it up for themselves, or to make it easier for the park service or personal gain - it was taking the same attitude that Glenn would take. Its how would Glenn handle this, and we want to do it as well as Glenn would do it.

Jean: He was an upstanding role model.

Bill: And this guy did it well, he even did his mistakes well, it wasn't that he always did it right, he did it wrong but he did it wrong in a way that you wished all your wrongs would be.

But all the time you wanted to do each of these things as well as what would be Glenn's standard. You wanted to come up to whatever that nebulous thing was

He was not an easy person to communicate with and he wasn't particularly articulate, he didn't have a good curriculum - how he wanted you to do things - spelled out, he wrote up practically nothing.

So it was really vague and unclear, really vague the whole operation was so experimental that he I think knew he shouldn't interfere he kept himself always from interfering.

Jean: But he had the foresight to realize he shouldn't interfere.

Bill: If you did something wrong, and he knew it, he would really let you know, and boy he would let you know right in front of everybody else, I mean you got the full impact. He didn't do it in a mean way, or anything else he just simply said, "We'll have that no more, that's it, that does not happen again." and he was extreme in that degree things were very black and white on that.

Jean: Did he and beth come together every year?

Bill: She wasn't always there, she had another job [or nursing] she tried to [pull him away] certainly his attention was on accommodating her, how much it pulled him away, I don't know I don't think he had very much more to contribute really, I think he contributed all he could, all he was gong to.

They lived in the building where the office is now, run out of their summer play in a way.

[Jean asks about the introductions]

The introductions came in a little later.

[Bill says he found he was doing things he didn't know he had done due to Glenn's elaborate introductions which were more flavorful than truthful.]

Bill: Oh yes, and I also learned not to object. At first you tried to excuse it and tell the clients that I'm not that good, or something like that because a) I didn't want to undermine him okay, b) I wanted to live up to what he was saying, and if they had that picture of me, okay, then I wanted to see if I could really live up to it, at least temporarily live up to it, if Glenn puts me on that high pedestal then I will try to accommodate him for the sake of him and for the school and I would find myself living up to it, if only temporarily, and then the praise would go higher.

[Jean asks if its true Glenn used to keep a bottle of whiskey in the office, and if Bill remembers any funny stories about things he did, mischief he got into.]

Bill: Gosh, I never took the humorous view, I was too deep in the battle, I guess, not that I was against the new, but just the complaint that it overrode the old. And I was so involved in holding that line, the humor more or less escaped me.

[Bill suggests Herb Swedlund as a person Jean could talk to about the funnier things that happened.]

Bill: Herb is really funny, he can make humor out of so many things. I was way too serious, I was serious all the way through, I was out to make this a profession, and not so much for me but a profession for others to do.

[Briggs was the first to ski down the Grand Teton in 1971. He guided for 22 years, and now is 62 years old.]

Jean: Why is the school called the Exum guide school and not Petzoldt Exum?

Bill: Glenn is very forgiving by nature, he started out with Paul, and became Paul's first guide, and Glenn was very surprised, very grateful to Paul and in a way I guess idolized him as many people do.

The conflict came when Paul wanted to promote, and Glenn had a problem with the promotion [of the guide school] Paul was into big publicity

Egomania, okay, which Glenn objected to, but also forgave him at the same time, but they both learned the business, and Glenn ethically didn't like it enough, that he decided he couldn't live with it for himself, it was false for Glenn, it may have been fine for Paul, it was not right for Glenn.

So, they agreed to split up and they would run opposite years, alternate years and Paul had an accident with one of his guides who died in the Ford Couloir and that really shook Paul up, that really shook Paul up, so Paul sold or gave the business to Glenn, that was the reason why Glenn then inherited the entire business, okay, and it wasn't that there was much business, I mean this was not a big deal,

so Paul got out of the business entirely, he would up as a -- in Las Vegas, a -- lived in Lander, got married.

Paul was quite a good rock climber but really aggravated Jack Durrance, this came out on Devil's Tower. A guy had parachuted on top of Devil's tower, so Jack who was at Dartmouth at the time, a really outstanding rock climber, put a route up, so the Durrance route was put up, and he saved this guy on top of the mountain, and Jack had done it, but Paul was there, and Paul got all the credit. Paul was there and Paul was very sure that his face was in front of the camera all the time and he was talking to life magazine while Jack was putting up the route.

Jean: Paul was much more flamboyant.

Bill: So Jack never forgave him for that, okay. Paul was really ticked off, Paul was trying to make a profession out of this, and Jack had no inclination to make a profession, Jack was a total amateur all the way through and had no intention of being a professional and Paul knew it and Paul was trying to make it for himself, you know how those things are, so the one didn't understand the other, and to an extent what Paul did was help build up a profession at Jack's expense.

Jack is really, still, to this day, [angry about that]

But here again, the same thing with Glenn, here is Paul trying to make a business out of this, but Paul was looking to make a year-round business out of this. You have to understand what the guy was doing, and Glenn was wanting to run a reputable business.

[Bill says they recognized the conflict, and divided the business, then Paul left on his own.]

Paul left started Outward Bound and then NOLS, which is a year-round business, you got to take a look at what Paul accomplished, really a wonderful contribution something we've all profited from.

He made a living from the hard work that these guys put in.

Jean: That's really the beauty of what Glenn has done, even if Glenn was not the best climber, his legacy is so extensive.

Bill?: He is the forefather of american mountaineering even though he himself didn't continue the actual mountaineering part, but he sort of provided the integrity for, I think, uh, I think the profession owes what integrity its got to Glenn Exum, in this country, I don't know what guiding is like in Europe.

Jean: Were you aware at all of what was happening there compared to what was happening here?

Bill: All I did at the time, was to recognize that in this greenhouse, okay, in which I was privileged to be, I was growing, and I was growing so fast that I was totally taken up with just the fact of my own growth. In other words I was simply working that - I was in this marvelous situation, and you know I first attributed it to this is Willie's influence, or Pownall, or somebody else or its Corbet or - each of these people I was working with and finally it began to dawn on me all these people are working under Glenn and you never saw that this was coming from the fact that Glenn was taking care of us.

It gradually grew on me, I didn't know it at the time, I had no idea, I was lost, but along in the 70s, I was really looking at the situation and what the values were and I could see at the time that no one was recognizing the value that Glenn was for all of us or the profession as a whole. It was becoming obvious to me in the 70s, but that was 15 years after I started.

You didn't know it. All you knew was that you had this sometimes cantankerous, opinionated older man who was out of the mainstream of what was going on in climbing, having an effect, and uh, you were working for this guy, and as far as I was concerned I wanted to be working for this guy, I often took a look at it from another point of view saying who else would I be working with, if I was working.

I had worked for other people occasionally, Jack Dornan was one, and I found I could get along with Jack okay, he'd get mad at me and try to fire me but he couldn't fire me, he couldn't do it, and I had a great respect for the guy.

He couldn't fire me, hard as he tried, so he'd wind up firing somebody else, he had to reduce his staff, he had to get rid of somebody, but it couldn't work, he tried really hard.

Dave Dornan and I would go off and do these climbs at night, then come into work, we had to work 7 days a week, but we still had to get our climbing in, right?

Well we get the job done, if I'm not getting the job done, Jack you should fire me.

And I worked for Junior ---, all american greatest I worked with junior and Junior was again one of these great people, very much like Glenn, he didn't know what he was doing, he wrote up nothing, all he had was this greenhouse, of the people that were working in the ski school when I joined it, working under Junior, every one of us became ski school directors, every single person there became a ski school director.

[Now Briggs is in charge of the Snow King ski school]

Bill: A greenhouse, everybody that worked for Glenn became an outstanding person and I really decided to make a study of this, what is this greenhouse that these guys... Its that their integrity is so high, squeaky clean honest people. Glenn would never cheat you out of one penny, I mean, he would never do you dirt. He would always make sure its in your favor, and your best interest, these guys are really outstanding human beings. We don't have enough of them around, really, we need more Glenn Exum, and then it became, we recognized it in Junior, those of us that worked for him, boy did we ever know we were in heaven, and it was not so obvious with Glenn, uh, I can remember Junior only once, calling down one of the instructors, okay, and making such an apology for having to call him down, and he only did it once and I think he had a tear in his eye. Glenn when he had to call someone down made a really overt thing

and he really laid it out on the line and that would scare everybody, I mean all the guides. It was less obvious how good a scene it was under Glenn, and after my experience with junior, I could then see that Glenn was doing this, so from the mid-60s on --

Jean: Maybe climbers would be less apt to notice than skiers because they are more individual. Did Glenn fire you?

Bill: I was fired, not from Glenn.

[here, Briggs goes into a description about the four current Exum guide school owners, which I won't transcribe here because it doesn't seem necessary for this first section. Then we discuss the hootenanny.]

Bill: ...back into the climbing scene because Glenn would send us out with big groups, and he would go along with the bigness scene and you wound up learning how to accommodate large numbers of clients, and Pete Sinclair, I think, had some influence on cutting down those numbers, he wanted to go with smaller groups, but Pete Lev really insisted and Rod backed him up. We can't deal with large numbers, and that is wrong.

[subsequently, pay was lower]

Bill: Pay wasn't something we were looking for, I would get Glenn to raise the pay, Herb and I would. You get used to doing, I pretty much handled the pay, through those, I would keep increasing it, raising the price and getting Glenn to raise the price, make it equitable for all of us, it worked out pretty well, used to doing a fair job.

But it was building up the profession, and Glenn wanted to go along with building the profession, that was the whole idea, and Steve - was the only guide that really came in and helped me with that, everybody else, they really were awkward about it, that -- had the same attitude, the greater the numbers you could deal with, the better the position and the better the experience and the better for the profession, and the guide needs to come up to being able to handle the numbers, which is really all there is to it, and Pete Lev

just dug in his heels, okay? Absolutely dug in his heels, no it is not going to happen, that is it, its not going to happen.

Jean: When did this happen? In the late 70s?

Bill: Anyway, Peter just dug in his heels and Rod backed him up and the consequences of it is you slow down the advance of the profession, you slow down the advance of the guide and how we can do things. You take innovation out. You really put a clamp on the whole situation you know -- and I would belay two clients at the same time. You know that was the standard thing that we did, and it was obvious to us that a guide needs to be able to handle much larger groups, we're not talking small increase of one or more clients, you need to be able to handle a great many, and you could have all kinds of assistant guides going along, to learn how to do it.

The guide in charge of the group needs to have the ability to handle large groups and boy, steve was a genius, he came with it, he didn't learn it from us, he just came with it. He did all kinds of innovations, and just got squeezed out of it pretty quick.

[Bill suggests I ask McLaren about Glenn's influence on the park service.]

Bill: This man had integrity and it was all together, and we don't have anybody right now.

I do enjoy talking about Glenn, because he is a giant among -- there were others, Chouinard is one of them, but he doesn't run the guide service.

The guys that he had, Willie Unsoeld

Barry is very underrated, he is superb, but never out for Barry, he always had your interests foremost, never advancing his own, one of those very tough guys to talk with - because he is private [Bill says I should do an in-person interview] Very underrated, and he always attributed Jake as being the foremost guide.

Those early guides, the early guides that quality is outstanding, so I

wrote it all up, and I put it into a course a guides course, so I've got a training course, and I get one for one the high quality out of these guys. Tom Turiano is the only one up there working now, he's the only one that is guiding who took the course. I took two people through the upper end control course, how to control people, because I used to watch Willie, Byrd and Pownall do this.

The end result, the end- is that they can do what Willie, Doug ... [Bill continues to describe his course. At one point Glenn suggested Briggs continue to train all the guides, started to do this and then it got shot down.]

Bill: Glenn recognized that the clients coming back with me had the stars in their eyes that Willie used to have, and he wanted that transferred to the other guides, and I had found out how to do it and what all, but I was not accepted by the other guides. I was a junior, I physically was not accepted by the other guides [everyone was stronger than Briggs.]

I reduced the safety margin down very very small, and did it as a drill, all the time, to keep the safety margin narrow, not broad, the idea is to always keep it as small a margin as you can safely get away with, and you ran it that way because then when it happened in a life and death situation, you could deal with it better, I worked it that way and Glenn always worked it that way.

So you had the guides impression that Glenn was not a safe guide, Glenn was not a safe guide. I got influenced in some respects, but I would go back to this narrow margin, and the students liked it because the responsibility was then theirs, uh, they really liked it, it was really good, every once in a while things would go wrong and you would have to clamp down quickly because something was screwy the climate the atmosphere just had gone screwy and you had to wide the margin of safety rapidly. I remember one incident.

I had an intermediate school, Jeff [Foote] had a basic school, we both had intermediate school boy things went screwy all of a sudden. I had one guy on belay, climbing up all of a sudden, so I took over the belay from the client and had the person go back down, down climb

and lowered him down, I actually dropped him the last bit, he fell over and got bruised.

Got him off the rope, still couldn't figure out what the hell was going on and a rock let loose down the walk up gully, and Jeff, and there were clients down there walking up to basic school. They were just going to get demolished. I couldn't get out of the belay position I was in fast enough to do anything. And Jeff jumped in front of the rock and stopped it. I was trying to figure out what was going wrong and I had to clamp down everything and hold all my guys in, stop the whole works, and it was Jeff was the one who had saved the day. So I checked with him afterwards and I said do you remember that day and he said yeah, God, how did you know to get in there and stop that rock, and he said, I don't know, just something in the air,

But uh, he had felt it too.

So there is this sort of sixth sense if you want out of the whole thing, which some of the guides would have, and some wouldn't, and I think it is a quality which can be enhanced.

[Description of course on this section of the tape.] The training of how to get somebody up to being a Willie Unsoeld.

Jean: Do you know Beth?

Bill: I don't know Beth, - she is quite a warm and gracious person, makes a good nurse, I just really - and diplomatic, um, good friends, I've never gotten close to her. I'd gotten close to the daughter, Glenda, had some correspondence with her, she was at loose ends at one point, Eddie wound up with an accident that pretty well finished his guiding career did okay, needed training bad, did do pretty well. A climbing accident, a rock hit him in the head, in the Wind Rivers, an awkward evacuation, with Al Read. Al was climbing with somebody else and Eddie didn't wear helmets in those days.

And the final -- I wanted to save this until the end, because I get into trouble with it. There is a consideration of considering or contemplating optimum survival for oneself, for the group for a

profession, the species of mankind for other living things, for material goods, for spiritual qualities, or the last one, uh, optimum survival for god or whatever you consider that may be, cause it can only be infinity optimum survival for infinity, but, Glenn has those things in mind. He considers the optimum survival for each of those dynamics and he operates that way, and he operates that way in all of his decisions he always did, and he was dead on, he was *just* dead on all the way. Now, uh, the person that can instantly consider in what he does, all of those things, is the most rational of the beings that we can have, and he happens to be one. Not everybody acts that way, he was one of the few, or did naturally, as a consequence he is a very ethical - has been all of his life

That is what the greenhouse is, that is what we call ethics. Ethics is reason, it is distorted very badly today, not very well understood, it comes from the individual, it does not come from society, we have ethics committees, well you can't have an ethics committee under the real definition of the term, this comes from the individual, it doesn't come from the committee, uh, its the individual, uh, what was so successful about Glenn was that he encouraged your ethics, he supported your ethics, he brought you together that you could trust in yourself, and that was the greenhouse that he provided us, very clean, extremely clean.

It needs to be recognized, the service that he has provided so many of us, I brought it up to Glenda, because she was having a little tough time with him being so strict, and I brought up that he really was extremely good from an ethical point of view, an outstanding man, and I think that pretty well handled the problem at the time. Anyway, its missed. And the fact that it is missed is too bad, because it is the most valuable item that we have in a civilization, is ethics, the individual taking care of his own ethics. And Glenn is overlooked in his contribution in that respect. He is just simply overlooked. Its value overrides everything else. It doesn't matter that he wasn't that good a climber or that good a guide or whatever other faults, a simple man, never wrote any of his stuff down, okay, all of those things are pretty minor consequences the thing that he was great for was the ethics.